


# CLASSIC DRIVER

## 1924 Bentley 3 Litre

- Lot sold  
USD 306 740 - 368 088  
GBP 250 000 - 300 000 (listed)  
**Year of manufacture** 1924
- **Chassis number** 373
- **Number of seats** 2
- **Drivetrain** 2wd
- **Lot number** 556
- 
- **Drive** LHD
- **Condition** Used
- **Location** 
- **Fuel type** Petrol
- **Exterior colour** Other
- 

### Description

The ex-George Daniels  
1924 Bentley 3-Litre 'Speed Model' Tourer  
Coachwork by Vanden Plas  
Registration no. XP 9727  
Chassis no. 373

With characteristic humility 'W O' was constantly amazed by the enthusiasm of later generations for the products of Bentley Motors Limited, and it is testimony to the soundness of his engineering design skills that so many of his products have survived. From the humblest of beginnings in a mews garage off Baker Street, London in 1919 the Bentley rapidly achieved fame as an exciting fast touring car, well able to compete with the best of European and American sports cars in the tough world of motor sport in the 1920s. Bentley's domination at Le Mans in 1924, 1927, 1928, 1929 and 1930 is legendary, and one can only admire the Herculean efforts of such giants as Woolf Barnato, Jack Dunfee, Tim Birkin and Sammy Davis, consistently wrestling the British Racing Green sports cars to victory.

W O Bentley proudly unveiled the new 3-litre car bearing his name on Stand 126 at the 1919 Olympia Motor Exhibition, the prototype engine having fired up for the first time just a few weeks earlier. Bentley's four-cylinder 'fixed head' engine incorporated a single overhead camshaft, four-valves per cylinder and a bore/stroke of 80x149mm. Twin ML magnetos provided the ignition and power was transmitted via a four-speed gearbox with right-hand change. The pressed-steel chassis started off with a wheelbase of 9' 9½" then adopted dimensions of 10' 10" ('Standard Long') in 1923, the shorter frame being reserved for the TT Replica and subsequent Speed Model. Rear wheel brakes only were employed up to 1924 when four-wheel Perrot-type brakes were introduced.

In only mildly developed form, this was the model that was to become a legend in motor racing history and

which, with its leather-strapped bonnet, classical radiator design and British Racing Green livery, has become the archetypal Vintage sports car.

Early success in the 1922 Isle of Man Tourist Trophy, when Bentleys finished second, fourth, and fifth to take the Team Prize, led to the introduction of the TT Replica (later known as the Speed Model) on the existing 9' 9½" wheelbase, short standard chassis. Identified by the Red Label on its radiator, the Speed Model differed by having twin SU 'sloper' carburettors, a higher compression ratio, different camshaft and the close-ratio A-type gearbox, the latter being standard equipment prior to 1927 when the C-type 'box was adopted. These engine changes increased maximum power from the standard 70 to 80bhp and raised top speed to an impressive 90mph. Other enhancements included the larger (11-gallon) fuel tank and (usually) André Hartford shock absorbers. Bentley made approximately 1,600 3-Litre models, the majority of which was bodied by Vanden Plas with either open tourer or saloon coachwork.

The accompanying illustrated report, compiled by leading marque authority, Dr Clare Hay, and incorporating copies of factory records, suggests that chassis number '373' was probably completed on the 10' 10" 'Standard Long' chassis, although now is to Speed Model specification with 9' 9½" wheelbase. Viewing of the report is highly recommended, and contains a number of fascinating images. The original engine was numbered '375', and that number is stamped to the crankcase and magneto turret of the unit currently installed. It would appear that '373' was originally bodied as a saloon with Weymann-type coachwork, possibly by the firm of Chalmer & Hoyer. The registration 'XP 9727' (a London number) was allocated on 10th January 1924 and the five-year guarantee issued on the 14th of that month.

The Bentley's first owner was Philip Rhodes of 1 Montagu Place, Montagu Square, London NW1, a well-connected enthusiast who owned no fewer than seven Bentleys between 1924 and 1928. However, he did not keep '373' for long, as the guarantee was transferred to J Midgley Illingworth on Willesden, London NW10 in March 1924. In February 1926, the guarantee was transferred to one S P Pulham of East Finchley, London N2, who in October of that year advertised the car for sale as a '1924 Bentley 4-door Weymann saloon, passed 100% by Bentleys recently'. Factory records list the next owner, from early 1927, as one Francis William Bontor of Barnes, London SW13.

The next owner listed is one R L Broad, a one-year guarantee being issued on 24th June 1934. Prior to that date, in January 1934, '373' had been extensively rebuilt and updated by Bentley Motors. These works included fitting low-g geared steering, a 'C'-type gearbox, a Spicer-pattern prop-shaft, and 4½-Litre-pattern Perrot shafts, while the engine was rebuilt with a late-type sump and a pair of SU HVG5 vertical carburettors. Dr Hay remarks that '373' may have belonged to Bentley Motors at this time, as the factory was engaged in buying and reconditioning chassis, re-bodilying them before resale. '373' is known to have carried a two-door saloon body by Kingsway Motors, and it is possible that theirs was the one fitted in 1934. Service records relating to Mr Broad's period of ownership mention rebuilding the engine around a second-hand cylinder block in the latter half of 1938. No records exist for the war years.

The next recorded owner is a Mr Bohane, who acquired the Bentley in 1945 and sold it some 15 years later to the celebrated watchmaker and car collector, George Daniels. At this time (circa 1960) the Kingsway saloon body was still fitted, while the Bentley had in the meantime acquired a Wilson pre-selector gearbox. Daniels sold '373' to Jim Pearce, who commenced a rebuild, removing the saloon body and Wilson 'box, and fitting an early 'A'-type gearbox (number '240') and an original Vanden Plas body (number '1078') that had just been removed from chassis number '697'.

In September 1966, '373' was briefly registered to Nigel Robin Dyer, passing into the current family ownership in October of that year. The Bentley's history during the current ownership has been recorded by the vendor's father in a hand-written notebook. Recent works saw the fuel system, brakes, wheels, wiring, etc overhauled in 2016 by James E Pearce of Wisborough Green, West Sussex (Jim Pearce's company) while in 2017 the engine was rebuilt by renowned marque specialist, William Medcalf. Invoices for these works totalling £12,750 and £47,500 respectively are on file together with others. Additional documentation consists of an old-style continuation logbook (issued 1947), the 1966 purchase receipt, expired MoTs dating back to 1967, a V5C Registration Certificate, and the aforementioned Hay Report (perusal recommended). A wonderful opportunity to acquire a beautiful 'W O' Bentley, benefiting from long-term family ownership and recently refurbished by two of the best specialists in the business.

Please note a pair of SU Model G5 Sloper carburettors suitable for Bentley Speed Model 3-Litre, and previously fitted to '373' are offered in the sale, lot 85.

Bonhams 1793

**Title** Mr

**First name** Bonhams Collectors' Car department

101 New Bond Street

London

W1S 1SR

United Kingdom

**Phone** +44-02074477447

**Fax** +44-2074477401

<http://www.bonhams.com/auctions/24877/>

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